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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2022-23)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
(DEPARTMENT OF POSTS)**

**[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations
of the Committee contained in their Forty-fourth Report (Seventeenth Lok
Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants' (2023-24)]**

FIFTY-FIRST REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August 2023/ Sravana 1945 (Saka)

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**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
(DEPARTMENT OF POSTS)**

**[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations
of the Committee contained in their Forty-fourth Report (Seventeenth Lok
Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)]**

Presented to Lok Sabha on 10.8.2023

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 10.8.2023



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August, 2023/Sravana, 1945 (Saka)

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**Composition of the Standing Committee on Communications and
Information Technology (2022-23)**

Shri Prataprao Jadhav - Chairperson

Lok Sabha

2. Smt. Sumalatha Ambareesh
3. Shri Karti P. Chidambaram
4. Dr. Nishikant Dubey
5. Smt. Sunita Duggal
6. Shri Jayadev Galla
7. Smt. Raksha Nikhil Khadse
8. Dr. Sukanta Majumdar
9. Smt. Mahua Moitra
10. Shri P. R. Natarajan
11. Shri Santosh Pandey
12. Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore
13. Dr. Gaddam Ranjith Reddy
14. Shri Sanjay Seth
15. Shri Ganesh Singh
16. Shri Parvesh Sahib Singh
17. Shri Shatrughan Prasad Sinha
18. Shri L.S. Tejasvi Surya
19. Dr. T. Sumathy (A) Thamizhachi Thangapandian
20. Dr. M. K. Vishnu Prasad[@]
21. Shri S. Jagathrakshakan^{\$}

Rajya Sabha

22. Dr. Anil Agrawal
23. Shri V. Vijayendra Prasad[#]
24. Dr. John Brittas
25. Shri Syed Nasir Hussain
26. Shri Ilaiyaraaja
27. Shri Jaggesh
28. Shri Praful Patel
29. Shri Kartikeya Sharma
30. Shri Jawhar Sircar
31. Shri Lahar Singh Siroya

Secretariat

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. Shri Satpal Gulati | - | Additional Secretary |
| 2. Smt. A. Jyothirmayi | - | Director |
| 3. Smt. Rinku Awasthi | - | Executive Officer |

Committee constituted w.e.f. 13th September, 2022 *vide* Para No.5288 of Bulletin Part-II dated 4th October, 2022.

[@] Dr. M. K. Vishnu Prasad has been nominated *vice* Dr. Shashi Tharoor *vide* Para No. 5311 of Bulletin Part-II dated 12th October, 2022.

^{\$} Shri S. Jagathrakshakan has been nominated *vide* Para No. 5580 of Bulletin Part –II dated 8th December, 2022.

[#] Shri V. Vijayendra Prasad has been nominated *vice* Dr. Laxmikant Bajpayee *vide* Rajya Sabha Bulletin No. 63085 dated 12th April, 2023 of Parliamentary Bulletin Part II.

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology (2022-23), having been authorised by the Committee, present this Fifty-first Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-fourth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Ministry of Communications (Department of Posts).

2. The Forty-fourth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and also laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 21 March, 2023. The Ministry of Communications (Department of Posts) furnished their Action Taken Notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Forty-fourth Report on 21 June, 2023.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their Sitting held on 7 August, 2023.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, Observations/Recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold in Chapter-I of the Report.

5. An analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Forty-fourth Report of the Committee is given at Annexure-II.

New Delhi;
...7...August, 2023
...16 Sravana, 1945 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV,
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Communications and Information Technology.

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology deals with action taken by Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty- fourth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2023-24) relating to the Ministry of Communications (Department of Posts).

2. The Forty-fourth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 21 March, 2023 and also laid in Rajya Sabha, the same day. It contained 11 Observations/ Recommendations. Replies of the Government in respect of all the Observations/Recommendations have been received from the Department of Posts and are categorized as under:-

(i) Observations/ Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:-

Para Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10,

Total :8
Chapter II

(ii) Observations/ Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies:-

Para Nos. NIL

Total : 0
Chapter III

(iii) Observations/ Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:-

Para No. 6

Total :1
Chapter IV

(iv) Observations/ Recommendations in respect of which replies are interim in nature

Para No. 9,11

Total : 2
Chapter V

3. The Committee trust that utmost importance would be given to implementation of the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee further desire that Action Taken Notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-I of this Report should be furnished to them at an early date.

4. The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their Recommendations.

Recommendation No.2

Revenue Receipts

5. The Committee, in their Original Report, had recommended as under:

“The Committee note that the Revenue Receipts of the Department were Rs. 10632.50 crore in 2020-21 which marginally increased to Rs. 10860.80 crore in 2021-22. For the year 2022-23, the revenue receipts have been pegged at Rs. 7948.39 crore till December, 2022. The Department has set ambitious targets for the year 2023-24 and the BE for 2023-24 stands at Rs. 13439.38 crore. The Committee note that the Department is earning revenue from Speed Post, Business Post, Business Parcel, postage through franking machines, sale of

stamps, philatelic ancillaries, Money Order (MO) and Indian Postal Orders (IPO), retail post, logistic post, e-bill collection, G2C services such as Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK), Aadhaar services, etc, receipts from other postal Administrations, savings bank and cash certificate remuneration etc. Further, it is seen that several measures have been taken by the Department to achieve the targets during 2022-23 such as focus on Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) account opening; thrust on parcel business with tie-ups with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED), GeM, private e-commerce players; focus on IPPB, technology initiatives like ATM, E-banking, M-banking, National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), Core Banking Solution(CBS), CBS-CTS (Cheque Truncation System) integration, e-PAN validation, account opening and closure facility for National Savings Certificate, KisanVikas Patra, Recurring Deposit, Term Deposit and Public Provident Fund through internet banking, monitoring of targets, etc. Furthermore, the Department has adopted a three pronged strategy for increasing parcel business that includes improving the infrastructure and parcel handling capacity for smooth handling of the increased parcel volume, upgradation of the technology platform for improving the operational efficiency and meeting the customer expectations. Apart from the above, a number of measures have been taken by the Department of Posts to achieve the revenue targets during FY 2022-23. These include establishment of four parcel hubs for exclusive and expeditious processing of parcels, four nodal delivery centres have been operationalised for expediting door step delivery of parcels in 2022-23 and 4 routes of postal road transport network have been operationalised. Additional parcels handling capacity of 14.35 lakh parcel per annum has been created bringing the total capacity to 12.75 crore parcels per annum. Payment through UPI QR code has been implemented at all post offices counters. Cash on Delivery and Insurance charges have been reviewed and revised to meet the Courier, Express and Parcel Market Standards. 605 Parcel Packaging units have

been established in selected post offices across the country and customer interface has been improved through MIS and Customer Relationship Management Portal.

The Committee observe that the focus areas in FY 2023-24 are doorstep pick-up and delivery services of parcels , agreement signed with GeM for pick up of consignments, agreement with National Handloom Development Corporation for providing them logistics support for supply of yarns, agreement with Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India and tie-up with Open Network for Digital Commerce for providing logistics solutions. Further steps have been taken for technology integration including 1.45 lakh mobile phones for delivery staff, new Application Programme Interface Integration facility, monitoring of performance of Speed Post , corporate customer specific MIS, CRM for bulk customers and so on. Single points of contact have been designated for corporate customers having monthly business of Rs. 10 lakh and above, registration process of bulk customer under Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) and National Account Facility (NAF) has been revised. There have been tie ups with the Election Commission of India and UIDAI, with Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for delivery of Unique Disability ID cards, with LIC, Govt of Rajasthan, delivery of Driving License, Registration Certificates, Traffic Challans and notices and so on. Given the credibility which the Department enjoys, the Committee opine that the initiatives w.r.t. doorstep pick- up and delivery services of parcels will definitely bring about significant changes in the Indian economy, apart from boosting the revenues to the Department. The Committee appreciate the initiative of the Department in launching the new Parcel product 'Rail Post Gati Shakti Express Cargo Service' in collaboration with the Indian Railways. This is to attract the new business for parcels weighing more than 35 kg in which the booking and delivery of the parcels will be undertaken by the Department of Posts whereas transmission of the parcels will be performed by Indian Railways. Further, the initiative

taken w.r.t. packaging of parcels at the post office is praiseworthy and needs to be expanded to cover more post offices. The word of caution here is that the quality of packaging is to be ensured so as to have a sustainable consumer base, especially w.r.t. fragile items. The Department may also examine the feasibility of opening parcel booking counters at airports which could facilitate passengers to book their excess baggage at these counters instead of paying heavy costs for excess baggage that are currently being charged by the Airlines.”

6. The Department of Posts , in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:

“The availability of Parcel packaging services has now been further extended to more locations and is currently available at 697 Parcel Packaging Units (PPUs) in comparison to the earlier 605 PPUs. The Parcel Packaging materials of industry standards have been prescribed under the Parcel Packaging Policy and the procurement of prescribed quality is emphasized upon by the Department. Among other packaging materials such as corrugated boxes and flyers, inner filling materials such as bubble wrap, airbags, foam peanuts/pellets & shredded cardboard fillers have been prescribed under the Policy for keeping goods safe especially in respect of fragile items.

- Feasibility of opening of parcel booking counters at Airport to facilitate passengers to book their excess baggage was explored by Delhi Postal Circle. One counter is being operated by Delhi Postal Circle at IGI Airport, New Delhi and a parcel business of around Rs. 80 Lakh has been generated during the FY 2022-2023. In this respect, all Postal Circles where post offices are located in the departure halls / airport terminal buildings are being addressed to examine the feasibility of providing this service.”

Comments of the Committee

7. In the Original Report, the Committee had opined that the initiatives of doorstep pick-up and delivery services of parcels will be beneficial to the economy and bring increased revenues to the Department. The Committee had cautioned that the quality of packaging is to be ensured so as to have a sustainable consumer base. The Committee were of the view that the Department may also examine the feasibility of opening parcel booking counters at airports instead of paying heavy costs for excess baggage that are currently being charged by the Airlines. In their reply, the Department have stated that the availability of Parcel packaging services has now been further extended to more locations and is currently available at 697 Parcel Packaging Units (PPUs) in comparison to the earlier 605 PPU's and the procurement of prescribed quality of packaging material of industry standards have been emphasized upon. Further, one parcel booking counter is being operated by the Delhi Postal Circle at the IGI Airport, New Delhi and has generated a revenue of Rs. 80 lakh in FY 2022-23. The Committee are of the view that considering the behemoth size of the Department of Posts, this facility could be extended to other Airports in the country. Further, the Department could also explore the possibility of using biodegradable materials in its packaging to reduce the carbon footprint. The Committee may be apprised of the progress made in this regard. Further, the Department may also provide the statistical projections for the increase in revenue aimed for the current FY and highlight the concrete steps that are being taken for the same.

Recommendation No. 4

IT Induction and Modernisation

8. The Committee, in their Original Report, had recommended as under:

“The Committee note that IT Modernization Project of Department of Posts is being undertaken with a total outlay of Rs. 4909 crores. The Project involves

computerization and Modernization and networking of ~ 1, 59,000 Post Offices in the country, including ~ 1, 44,000 Branch Post Offices in rural areas run by the GraminDakSevaks. The project involves providing Central Server based integrated, modular and scalable solution for all the operations of Department of Posts including Mails, Human Resource, Banking, Insurance and Finance & Accounts. It also involves creation of IT Infrastructure like Data Centre, Disaster Recovery Centre, setting up of a Wide Area Network (WAN) and providing solar powered and portable hand-held computing devices (Micro ATM compliant) to all the Branch Post Offices. The Committee note that the actual expenditure during 2022-23 on the project is Rs. 567.90 crore on IT 1.0 and Rs. 8.64 crore on IT 2.0. An amount of Rs. 275.65 crore has been allocated to IT 1.0 and Rs. 653.02 crore has been allocated to IT 2.0 in BE 2023-24. The objectives of the IT modernization project of Department of Posts are modernization and computerization of all the non-computerized Post offices in the country including GraminDakSevak (GDS) Branch Post offices in rural areas, mail offices, administrative and other offices; Development of scalable, integrated and modular software covering all operations of the Department of Posts; Establishment of required IT Infrastructure including Data Centre, Wide Area Network (WAN) based networking of the departmental post offices; and DARPAN - RICT (Digital Advancement of Rural Post Offices for a New India-Rural Information Communication Technology (Rural ICT) infrastructure. The Project is implemented through eight different segments: Data Centre Facility (DCF), Network Integrator (NI), Financial Services System Integrator (FSI), Core System Integrator (CSI), Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for A New India (DARPAN) - Rural System Integrator (RSI) and Rural Hardware (RH), Mail Operations Hardware (MOH), and Change Management (CM).

With the implementation of IT Modernisation project, all Post Offices will be able to improve their quality of services and increase their productivity on account of improved IT system. Increase in access to the post office through web portal, mobile and call centers would give better services to the customers. Number

of transactions in postal, banking, insurance and retail activities of the post office are likely to increase as the reach of these services will be extended through IT Modernisation. Computerization of all the post offices with central data architecture will create an enabling environment for mail track and trace and other web based and mobile based services. Reduction in paper work, particularly in administrative and accounts offices and accessibility of information from centralized database will enable improved decision making and responsive administration. The main activities prioritized by the Department under the scheme are Postal and Logistics, IT infrastructure, Network (inclusive of the North East component), Data Center and disaster recovery system, Security, Field infra (inclusive of the North East component), Enterprise Fraud Risk Management etc. Appreciating the efforts being made by the Department, the Committee would like to emphasise that the works undertaken in this regard may be completed as envisaged and in a time bound manner.

Further, the Committee find that the objective of DOP IT 2.0 is to provide inclusive, integrated single-window view of postal and financial services to its stakeholders through multiple delivery channels using re-engineered processes and cutting-edge Information Technologies, leading towards an era of e-Governance. Overall benefit will be to the customers and stake holders through more reliable, speedy operations and transparent availability of information to the customers.

The Committee are of the view that IT modernization has indeed become a vital and integral part of every business plan of any Department or Organization. For the Department of Posts with its vast network and multifarious services, the importance of IT Induction and Modernisation can hardly be overemphasized. The Committee desire that the Department ensures proper implementation of this Scheme and improves operational efficiencies.”

9. The Department of Posts, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:

“The objective of DoP IT 2.0 is to provide inclusive, integrated single-window view of postal and financial services to its stakeholders through multiple delivery channels using re-engineered processes and cutting –edge Information Technologies, leading towards an era of e-Governance. Overall benefit will be to the customers and stake holders through more reliable, speedy operations and transparent availability of information to the customers.”

Comments of the Committee

10. The Committee had noted that the IT modernization had indeed become a vital and integral part of every business plan of any Department and was foundational to the functioning of the Department. The Committee had desired that the Department should ensure proper implementation of this Scheme and improve operational efficiencies. The Department in their reply have stated that the objective of the IT 2.0 project is to benefit customers and stakeholders through more reliable, speedy operations and transparent availability of information to the customers leading to an era of e-Governance. The Committee expect the Department to provide current status of IT Modernization project, total amount spent so far on it, and reasons of delays in adhering to the timelines. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their recommendation and expect the Department to implement the IT project with utmost dedication. The Department may also inform the Committee with the quantifiable physical targets achieved.

Recommendation no. 5

Estates Management – pending projects, accessibility issues and gender concerns

11. The Committee, in their Original Report, had recommended as under:

“The Committee note that the key objective of the Estates Management Scheme is to ensure development of an appropriate infrastructure to provide a congenial work environment and improve the delivery of postal services in a cost effective way for the benefit of the customers. The Scheme includes construction of postal buildings including Post Offices, mail offices, administrative offices, staff quarters, besides preservation and conservation of heritage buildings and reconstruction of dilapidated buildings. The Scheme also includes construction of additional toilets in existing buildings, installation of Roof Top Solar Power Packs and Rain Water Harvesting structures to contribute towards Sustainable Development Goals. Providing ramps and rails under the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan for improving the accessibility of Post Offices for differently abled persons is also a part of this scheme. The actual utilization during 2022-23 has been Rs. 22.32 crores which is less than a third of the RE of Rs. 70.10 crores. This is indicative of lack of proper planning and implementation.

The Committee further note that the major impediments being encountered in the implementation of the Scheme include not getting timely approval from Municipal Corporations and other State Government authorities for starting construction process, cancellation of tendering process due to single/high bidding, non-settlement of litigation process/court cases pertaining to the land owned by the Department and encroachment on Departmental vacant lands. The Committee do appreciate the efforts made by the Department to address these problems. These inter alia include preparation of a list of projects for construction and renovation of postal buildings to be taken up in FY 2023-24 which has been shared with all the Circles with the instruction to complete all the preconstruction formalities by 31.03.2023 so that work can be awarded in April 2023 itself, thereby ensuring optimum utilization of funds. The Circles have also been advised to depute officers to liaise with the local authorities and State Government authorities to expedite requisite approval.

Priority is being given for completion of pending projects. The Committee further note that the Department had submitted its proposal to Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation (MOSPI) vide DO letter dated 26.12.2022 to allow the MPLAD funds to be used for estate management of Department of Posts. The same has been approved by Mo SPI in the revised guidelines on MPLADS issued on 22nd February, 2023. The Committee would like to be apprised in this regard.

Further, the Committee note that presently Department is not earning any rentals for its estates. The Committee would like to draw the attention of the Department w.r.t. existing guidelines of the Department of Posts which deals with renting out excess built up space wherein rent revision is provided for at the rate of 10% per annum after every 03 years. The Committee would like to urge the Department to explore this wherever feasible.

With respect to pending projects, the Committee note that work has commenced on Poojappura and Karamana post offices but the work on Sasthamangalam post office in Kerala is yet to begin. The Committee had advised the Department to speed up work on the three projects in their 22nd, 28th, 33rd and 40th Reports and note that the post offices have not been made operational as yet. The Committee therefore emphasise that the Department must make all efforts to complete the work in the next FY. The Committee would like to prevail on the Department to expedite the works w.r.t. these pending projects.

Regarding the facilities for new post office buildings, one of the mandatory provisions has been the construction of ladies toilets. It is seen that in 2022-23(upto December, 2022), a total of 36 ladies toilets had been constructed in new postal buildings and 21 had been constructed in old buildings where separate facilities were not available for the ladies. These figures reflect very poorly with respect to providing basic amenities to the vast work force. It is seen that funds have been allocated to Estates Division under

Gender Concern. Further, with regard to providing other facilities, the Committee found that during the last three years, 383 ramps/railings, 80 adaptive rest rooms and only 1 Braille signage were constructed. The Committee note that only 21 Access Audits have been conducted in the last five years. From the foregoing, the Committee find that the progress made by the Department in addressing gender concerns and inclusive buildings is minuscule when compared to the mammoth size of the Department. The funds allocated to address Gender concern must be utilized optimally and judiciously. The Department ought to strive to provide facilities to their women workforce which inter- alia include separate ladies toilets, provision for crèches in the post office and so on. The Committee recommend that inclusiveness may be made mandatory for the design of all post office buildings in future and the guidelines for the design of all new buildings may be revised to aim at access for the differently abled to fulfil the objectives of the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan. The post office personnel may be sensitized to their specific needs and retrofitting of the existing buildings may be done on a regular basis. The Committee stress that access audits may be conducted periodically for the post offices and the Committee be informed of the progress in the matter.

The Committee recommend that priority may be accorded to the projects that have been pending for a long time and to those which cater to population still not covered by the reach of a post office. The efforts made by the Department for acquiring funds from the MPLAD are praiseworthy and the Committee hope that the MPLAD funds will be utilised in order to expedite pending projects and start new ones. The Department may also consider the feasibility of renting out its estates and utilizing vacant land through Build-Operate-Transfer Model and earn revenue in the process. The Committee may be apprised of the progress in this regard.”

12. The Department of Posts, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:

“Actual utilization of funds under Estates Management Scheme during the year 2022-23 has been Rs.68.62 Crore out of Rs. 70.10 Crore allotted in the year and not Rs. 22.32 Crore. The percentage utilization comes to 97.8%.

In view of the revised guidelines on MPLADS issued by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) which has come into effect from 1.4.2023, Department of Posts has been included therein.

The present status of post office building construction project at Poojappura, Karmana and Sasthamangalam and their likely dates of completion are as under:

Sr. No.	Project	Present Status
1	Karamana	External plastering and work of back side retaining wall in progress. Project likely to be completed in current financial year.
2	Poojappura	Plinth beam reinforcement and shuttering work over. Project likely to be completed by September, 2024.
3	Sasthamangalam	Foundation earth work in progress. Project likely to be completed by December, 2024.

Provision of separate ladies toilets has been made an integral part of the design of new post offices being constructed. In Financial Year 2022-23 50 ladies toilets have been constructed in new postal buildings. 57 ladies toilets and 2 retiring rooms were also constructed during FY 2022-23 in old buildings where separate facilities were not available for the ladies. Funds ofRs. 1.20 Crore have been allotted for construction of 60 ladies toilets and Rs. 30 Lakh for construction of 30 feeding rooms for ladies during the year 2023-24.

Construction of rails and ramps are mandatory for all new buildings being constructed in the Department of Posts to ensure easy accessibility for differently-abled persons and senior citizens. Rs.1 Crore have been allotted for retrofitting in

50 post offices with ramps & rails during the current financial year. Directions have been issued to make braille signages integral part of new buildings being constructed. Funds of Rs. 50 lakh have been allotted to install braille signages in 500 post offices in the year 2023-24.

Instructions have been issued to all the Circles to conduct bi-annual access audits of all the post offices and to set up a monitoring committee for the implementation of the accessibility norms in accordance with the Rights of Person With Disabilities Act, 2016 *vide* letter dated 12.05.2022 and reiterated *vide* 03.05.2023.”

Comments of the Committee

- 13. The Committee had, *inter alia*, recommended that the Department may also consider the feasibility of renting out its estates and utilizing vacant land through BOT model and earn revenue. The Department is silent on this issue in their reply. Further the Committee had desired that the work of Karamana, Poojapura and Sasthamangalam projects which had not been completed in a long time be expedited. The Department has informed that the work on Karamana post office was expected to be completed in the current FY while the work on other two would be completed by 2024. The Committee would like to emphasise that the projects have been much delayed and the Department needs to adhere to its timelines in order to complete the projects. Further, the Committee had recommended that the Department may accord priority to the projects that have been pending for a long time especially for the population not covered by a post office. The Department has not responded to this direction and the Committee reiterate their recommendation to focus on completion of pending projects and use of vacant land.**

Recommendation no. 6

India Post Payments Bank

14. The Committee, in their Original Report, had recommended as under:

“According to the budgetary allocations, the Committee note that the BE for 2022-23 was Rs. 200 crore for IPPB and the RE was double that of the BE i.e. Rs. 400 crore. For the 2023-24, the BE is Rs. 250 crore. The Committee note that India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been setup with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India, leveraging the last mile reach and penetration of the Postal network. IPPB has 650 branches/controlling offices, almost one in each district in the country. IPPB has enabled 1.38 lakh Post Offices (including 1.10 lakh in rural areas) to provide Banking services at the counters. IPPB has also equipped nearly 1.89 lakh Postmen and GraminDakSevaks with smartphone and biometric device to provide Doorstep Banking Services.

The Committee observe that IPPB has established an interoperable banking infrastructure for the public good contributing towards changing the financial inclusion landscape in India and address the last mile needs of the banking industry at large to provide doorstep services to the customers of ANY BANK through the Postmen and Gramin Dak Sevaks, leading to an increase in rural banking infrastructure by almost 2.5 times. The Bank has a customer base of 6.2 Cr customers, of which 75% are in Rural areas and 47% of the customers are Women.

The Committee note that powered by Aadhaar based eKYC., IPPB has ensured instant account opening with no manual intervention, especially for the rural population who may not possess the required documents prescribed by the Banking ecosystem to become part of the formal financial ecosystem. The IPPB-DoP combine has created a Physical Platform for Rural India enabled to provide Universal Services that has embedded Financial Services with Govt. Services through collaboration of Fintechs, Government and institutions in banking

ecosystem, thus providing a multitude of Citizen relevant services at the last mile.

The Committee understand that the IPPB has an Objective of Financial Inclusion in a cost effective way and to remove barriers to access basic financial services by the common man especially in the unbanked and underbanked areas. The IPPB have set ambitious targets (for 2023-24) of 1.59 lakh IPPB Access Points and 7.2 crore Cumulative Account Acquisition with measures like increased linkage of IPPB and POSA accounts to promote acquisition and customer balances. India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has enabled 1.38 lakh Post Offices to provide Banking services and has equipped nearly 1.89 lakh Postmen and GraminDakSevaks with a Smartphone and biometric device to provide doorstep banking services.

The Committee note that Department has approached RBI seeking relaxation for rolling out IPPB services in remaining post offices without submitting proposal under Annual Banking Outlet Expansion Plan to RBI. Apart from this, hiring for vacant post of Gramin Dak Sevak Branch Postmasters (GDS BPMs) have been expedited which would enable IPPB to roll out IPPB services in these Branch Post Offices. Regular interaction with all telecom service providers including BSNL is being undertaken to provide mobile connectivity in the technically not feasible locations. As a result, IPPB services have been provided in more than 2600 post offices in 2022-23. IPPB services will be enabled in remaining 21000 post offices by 2023-24.

Apparently, the Payment Bank business model provides limited avenues for revenue generation. The Committee find it encouraging that the IPPB has identified alternate revenue streams like G2C services to balance the revenue mix. There has been a consistent increase in the Bank's revenue in the past 2 years in spite of the onset of the pandemic. There has been a reduction in the net loss over the quarters through control of fixed expenses and discretionary expenditure.

The Committee have been informed that the Department vide D.O. letter dated 16.06.2021 had requested RBI to examine the possibility of relaxing the eligibility conditions for Small Finance Bank licensing. However, RBI expressed its inability to accede to Department's request. Department has once again approached RBI to reconsider conversion of IPPB into Small Finance Bank and the response from RBI is awaited.

The Committee observe that the key to revenue is enhanced CASA (Current Account & Savings Account) balance as IPPB earn direct revenue on CASA balance. Fresh acquisition along with Post Office Savings Accounts (POSA) linkage is key to improve CASA Balance. Further Premium Acquisition, Aadhaar Seeded Acquisition, Child Enrolment Lite Client (CELC) and Life & General Insurance lead generation/sell are the other sources of revenue generation in IPPB. Lauding the efforts of the Department, the Committee urge the Department to make concerted efforts to remove all restrictions on the revenue streams and widen the scope of IPPB into a Small Finance bank. This would enable it to offer loans and increase its revenue and thereby increase its profitability. The Committee may be informed of the progress made in the direction."

15. The Department of Posts, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:

"As desired by the Committee, the progress made by India Post Payments Bank as on date are as under:-

- a) IPPB has enabled 1.43 lakh Post Offices (including 1.27 lakh in rural areas) to provide Banking services at the counters. IPPB has also equipped nearly 1.89 lakh Postmen and GraminDakSevaks with smartphones and biometric devices to provide Doorstep Banking Services.
- b) Key achievements:
 - More than 6.76 Cr customers have opened accounts with IPPB
 - 78% of customers are in Rural areas

- 47% of customers are women
 - 9.5+ Cr customers of ANY Bank provided cash delivery at their doorstep
 - More than ₹ 6200 Crs customer deposits
 - Enabled more than 17 Cr UPI transactions per month
 - 2.79 Cr+ Customers with Aadhaar seeding in IPPB a/c to receive DBT benefits
 - More than 1.91 Cr customers received DBT/Social Welfare benefits
 - More than ₹ 14000 Cr Social Benefits disbursed to customers
 - More than 5.75 Cr customers provided with Aadhaar-based Government to Citizen services e.g., Child enrolment, Mobile number update & Doorstep Jeevan Praman Patra.
 - Bank covered more than 25 Lac individuals under 'Insurance for All' by enabling them with Group Accidental Guard General Insurance.
 - More than 15 Lac PM KISAN beneficiary account has been opened in this FY 2022-23. More than 34 Lakh PM KisanSamman Nidhi disbursement with IPPB.
 - IPPB and DoP in coordination with IEPFA have launched the NiveshakDidi program on 28th Oct, 2022 in J&K.
- c) DoP-IPPB is able to provide Financial Banking coverage to over 5.50-Lac villages basis out of the approx 6 lacs villages.
- d) IPPB has collaborated with various ministries and State Govts for providing citizen centric services like Digital Life Certificates, Aadhaar services (Mobile Number update). In addition, IPPB is working towards onboarding street vendors under the PMSVANIDHI program with MoHUA, providing Aadhaar based verification for PM KISAN beneficiaries with Ministry of Agriculture.

e) Business Performance YoY Growth

Particulars	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
Customer Accounts (cumulative)	2.37 Cr	4.29 Cr	5.18 Cr	6.63 Cr
Customer Deposits Rs(cumulative)	855.05 Cr	2300 Cr	3692 Cr	6292 Cr
Financial txn No.	5.14 Cr	21.01 Cr	67.11 Cr	144.67 Cr
Financial Txns Value (Rs)	14,152 Cr	59,299 Cr	100,939 Cr	164,327 Cr

Average Balance per customer (Rs)	360.78	536	713	949
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- f) IPPB has shown substantial growth on a YoY basis registering a growth of 63%. Bank will break even within 7 years by FY 2024-25.

Interest Income	45.76	80.44	128.46	278.87	117%
Transactional Income	7.06	129.62	329.87	464.73	41%
Other Income	1.94	2.98	2.87	7.39	157%
Total Revenue	54.76	213.04	461.20	750.99	63%
Interest Expenses	13.6	45.91	71.12	94.01	32%
Salary	264.29	283.22	296.35	269.40	-9%
Operating Expenses	223.23	210.8	263.20	361.91	38%
Total Expenses	501.12	539.93	630.67	725.32	15%
Operating Profit/ Loss	-446.36	-326.89	-169.47	25.67	-115%

Growth Factors

1. Enhanced Business lines leading to stable revenue streams
2. Focused approach towards Revenue earning services
3. Resource Productivity through constant engagement & training
4. Expense control for Bottom line improvement”

Comments of the Committee

- 16. The Committee had inter-alia noted in the 44th Report that the Department of Posts had requested RBI to examine the possibility of relaxing the eligibility conditions for Small Finance Bank licensing but RBI had not acceded to the said request. The Department had once again approached the RBI to reconsider its decision and the response was awaited. The Committee had urged the Department to make all efforts to**

remove all restrictions on the revenue streams and widen the scope of IPPB into a small finance bank in order to enable it to offer loans and increase its revenue and thereby increase its profits. The Committee express their dissatisfaction that the Department is silent on the issue in their reply. The Committee reiterate their recommendation and wish to be updated of the action taken in this regard.

Recommendation no. 8

Post Office Common Service Centres

17. The Committee, in their Original Report, had recommended as under:

“The Committee note that Common Service Centre (CSC) services in the country are being provided in 1,21,133 post offices, which includes 22,382 departmental post offices and 98,751 branch post offices in rural areas. The Committee have also been informed that 1,38,906 postal employees (35,162 Departmental employees and 1,03,744 GraminDakSevaks) have been trained to provide CSC Services through Post Offices. Incentives payable to Post Office staff and GDS is linked with revenue generated on the transactions made by them on CSC platform. Existing infrastructure of the Post Office is used for providing CSC services whereas in the rural Branch Post Offices, employees have option either to use Departmental infrastructure or bring their own infrastructure for providing CSC services. In case employee provides infrastructure, he is paid double the incentive as applicable in other case i.e. when infrastructure is provided by the Department.

The Committee also note that in Post Offices, CSC Services are provided by the postal staff in addition to their own duties and by utilizing existing infrastructure. No additional expenditure is incurred by the Department of Posts in providing CSC services at Post Office counters. Revenue earned for transactions conducted on CSC platform related to Common Service Centre services is shared between CSC-SPV and Department of Posts in the ratio of 20:80. The revenue

earned by the Department during 2020-21 was Rs. 7,45,351.39 which increased to Rs. 38,87,621.46 in 2021-22. During 2022-23, the amount had risen to Rs. 59,23,788.58 till December, 2022. The Department have submitted that 81 services are being provided that are related to Digital Seva Portal, election, labour service, pension, employment service, e-District, Bharat Bill Payment system, G2C and B2C services like Tour and Travels, FASTag, educational, financial services and utility services.

The Committee also note that in case of deficiency in the quality of CSC Services or any other issues related to CSC services in Post Offices viz. overcharging etc, customers can complain to the Postmaster/ Divisional Heads for redressal of their grievances, in a manner similar to other postal services provided at Post Offices.

The Committee have also been informed that the CSC services provided through Post Offices are dependent upon a number of factors viz. power supply, internet connectivity, demand for such services and availability of service providers on CSC platform to offer their services. CSC Services in Post Offices are provided through existing infrastructure of the Post Offices. In departmental post offices the existing Desktop PC, Printer, Scanner and Internet Connectivity are used for providing CSC Services where as in Branch Post Offices, the mobile handset given to the Postmaster by Department or Postmaster's own device is used for providing CSC Services. CSC – SPV provides access to their online portal (digitalseva.csc.gov.in) for delivery of CSC Services through Post Offices. CSC also provides training to postal staff and other backend technological support required for delivery of CSC Services.

The Committee note that during April to December, 2022, 9,30,322 transactions were carried out at PO-CSCs. The Committee understand that the post offices have utilized their existing manpower and infrastructure to provide the much needed services to the remote areas of the country thereby earning revenue in the process. The Committee desire that monitoring of the display /notice

boards/rate-charts at PO-CSCs may be micro-managed at the post office level and the Branch Postmaster may be responsible for the same. Notwithstanding, CSC e-governance private Limited Company can not absolve itself of the responsibility. The Committee find this aspect baffling and impress upon the Ministry to fix accountability of CSC company as well. The Committee also find that data related to number of services provided by PO-CSCs appear to be inconsistent, given the fact that the Department has submitted different figures before the Committee in their written replies on different occasions. The Department may, therefore, collate the information about the exact quantum of services provided by the PO-CSCs as compared to what is enumerated in the MoU and Report any glaring disparities to the Committee.

Besides, a dedicated helpline along with an email ID with a customer service team may be deployed for grievance redressal where the complaints lodged may be connected to a complaint management system with a turnaround time of 7 days. The Committee recommend that an appellate authority with an ombudsman at the helm may be appointed for monitoring the grievance redressal. The Committee further note with the concern that CSC is a private limited company having one golden share of the Government, has been gaining works purely on the basis of nomination and not on competitive bidding.

The Committee note that the services provided by CSC are primarily focused on Mobile recharge and electricity bill payments which reflects the myopic view of the CSC management. The share of the transactions of G2C services like agriculture insurance, filing of income tax returns and land record forms etc. is abysmally low and apparently points to the lack of promotion on part of CSC and the resultant lack of awareness of the target populace. The Committee have also learned that the CSC company has only focused on providing online training to the operators. The Committee, therefore, emphasise that the CSC should conspicuously display the full list of services provided and provide hands on training in both online and physical mode to the operators on a regular basis. The

Committee further note that the revenue earned by the PO-CSCs is approximately Rs. 48.90 per CSC during the FY 2022-23 which is astoundingly low and necessitates that the PO-CSCs should widen their ambit to cover more services for revenue. The Committee further recommend that the CSC should play a wider role in spread of internet connectivity to the Gram Panchayats and inform the Committee of the progress made in terms of connections provided.

The Committee conclude that the Department of Posts are self – sufficient in terms of human resource and may examine the feasibility of managing the entire ecosystem of CSC in the country. The infrastructure of the Gram Panchayats may be utilized and the DakKarmayogi portal may be used for providing training on CSC services to the postal employees. The amalgamation would result in increased reach of the post offices by utilizing the doorstep service model of the IPPB and would prove gainful to the Department. The Committee emphasise the Department to explore this possibility and apprise them of the progress in this regard.”

18. The Department of Posts, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:

“E-learning content is being developed for enrichment of knowledge of postal officials for better implementation of Common Service Centre services through postal network.

Presently, Common Service Centre (CSC) related services are being provided through 1,25,640 post offices in the country, which includes 23,077 Departmental Post Offices and 1,02,563 Branch Post Offices. A total of 1,46,154 postal employees (36,972 Departmental Employees and 1,09,182 GraminDakSevaks) have been trained to provide CSC services through post offices. During FY 2022-23, 11,85,432 CSC transactions were carried out through post offices resulting in revenue generation of Rs.76,86,912 for Department of Posts.

Postal Circles have been instructed to display notice boards indicating provision of CSC related services in post offices where CSC services are being provided. Monitoring of the notice boards depicting the details of CSC Services being provided at post office counters is done at the Postmaster and Divisional Superintendent level. Field units of CSC-SPV and Postal Circles have been instructed to promote and publicize citizen-centric CSC services being provided through post offices, with special focus on Government-to-Customer (G2C) services provided through post offices. Training to post office staff on CSC related services is being provided on regular basis through physical as well as online mode by CSC-SPV.

Customers can register their grievances with the Postmaster/ Divisional Heads for redressal of their CSC related grievance, in a manner similar to other postal services being provided through post offices. There is provision of a toll free number and raising tickets on Digital Seva Portal of CSC for grievance handling.

A total of 80 CSC services are being provided through post offices (Annexure-I). The number of CSC citizen centric services provided through post office counters is dynamic, wherein the number of CSC services will increase or decrease in the Digital Seva Portal, as and when CSC expands or curtails its tie-up with Government to Citizen(G2C) and Business to Citizen(B2C) service providers.

G2C services comprising of Pradhan MantriFasalBimaYojana (PMFBY), Pradhan Mantri Jan ArogyaYojana (Ayushman Bharat), Pradhan MantriShram Yogi MaandhanYojana (PM-SYM), e-shram registrations, passport services, National Pension Scheme, FASTAG, PAN Card etc. are available in all the post offices providing CSC related services. During FY 2022-23, a total of 11.85 lakhs CSC related transactions were done in post offices, out of which 24% of the transactions pertained to services like insurance renewals, PAN applications, passport applications, farmer registrations under PM-KISAN

and PMFBY and e-shram registrations. Other CSC services like mobile recharge and bill payments, being recurring in nature, constituted for around 60% of total transactions.

Under IT Modernization Project 2.0 of Department of Posts, One User Interface (One UI) will be developed, which will be the integrated front end interface for all users of department. The One UI along with the doorstep service delivery model of India Post Payment Bank (IPPB) will be utilized for providing G2C and B2C services to citizens, particularly in rural areas.

List of CSC Services provided through Post Office

Digital Seva Portal	1. PAN card
	2. Passport
	3. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
	4. PM AwasYojana
	5. Soil Health Card
	6. Pradhan MantriFasalBimaYojna
	7. PDS
	8. FSSAI License Application
	9. FSSAI Registration Certificate
	10. Birth/ Death Certificate
	11. Ayushman Bharat Yojna
	12. PM Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Pension Yojana
	13. Jeevan Pramaan
	14. IRCTC ticket Booking
Election	15. Voter Registration Form-6
	16. deletion of Name Form-7

	17. Modifications or Corrections Form-8, 8A
	18. Voter PVC Card Print
	19. Modification to Voter details
Labour Service	20. Labour Services
	21. Labour Certificate
	22. Labour Registration
Pension	23. National Pension Scheme (NPS)
	24. Swavalamban Contribution
Employment Service	25. Navy Recruitment
	26. Job Seekers Registration
	27. Application Form Submission
<u>State Government Services</u>	
e-District /SSDG (State)	28. Haryana eDistrict Services
	29. MP State Services
	30. West Bengal eDistrict Services
	31. Maharashtra State Services
	32. Karnataka eDistrict Services
	33. Jharkhand eDistrict Service
	34. UttarakhandeDistrict Service
	35. Chhattisgarh eDistrict Services
	36. Puducherry eDistrict Services
	37. Himachal Pradesh PanchParaman
	38. Daman & Diu
	39. Dadra & Nagar Haveli
	40. AP RTA Services
	41. eVahan Jammu & Kashmir
	42. Himachal SwasthyaBimaYojana (HIMCARE)
43. Tamil Nadu PDS Card Printing	

Other G2C Services	44. Sarthi
	45. E-Challan
	46. eStamp
	47. E-Vahan – Transport Services
Bharat Bill Payment System	48. BBPS Mobile Postpaid
	49. BBPS DTH
	50. BBPS Landline Postpaid
	51. BBPS Electricity
	52. BBPS Broadband Postpaid
	53. BBPS Water
	54. BBPS Gas
<u>B2C</u>	
Tour & Travels	55. Flight Ticket
	56. Bus Ticket
	57. e- Recharge (Mobile &DTH)
	58. SBlePay Maharashtra Transport
	59. SBlePay Maharashtra eGRAS
	60. SBlePay Maharashtra Nursing
	61. RashtrapathiBhavan Museum Ticket
FASTag	62. FASTAG Issuance
	63. FASTAG Purchase
	64. FASTAG Top up
	65. FASTAG Service
Educational Services	66. NIELIT Facilitation Centre
	67. Tally Software Registration

	68. ITI Registration
	69. Course Registration
	70. Online Admission
	71. CAD Registration
	72. Scholarships
<u>Financial Services</u>	
Banking Services	73. Acceptance of Loan applications
	74. EMI collections
Insurance	75. Life Insurance (Renewal)
	76. General Insurance (Renewal)
<u>Utility Services</u>	
IT Return	77. GST Return
	78. TDS Return
	79. DSC
	80. LLP Registration

Comments of the Committee

19. The Committee had recommended that the CSC should play a wider role in spread of internet connectivity to the Gram Panchayats and inform the Committee of the progress made in terms of connections provided. The Committee had emphasized that the Department should explore the possibility of increasing the reach of post offices by using doorstep service model of IPPB and apprise them of the progress in this regard. In their reply, the Department have informed that the training to post office staff on CSC related services is being provided on regular basis through physical as well as online mode by CSC-SPV. The Committee would like to be informed about the tangible outcomes of the measures taken by the Department.

Recommendation no. 9

Monthly Income Scheme and Senior Citizens Savings Scheme

20. The Committee, in their Original Report had recommended as under-

“The Committee note that as per the Budget Announcement of 2023-24, the maximum deposit limit for Monthly Income Scheme will be enhanced from Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 9 lakh for single account and from Rs 9 lakh to Rs 15 lakh for joint account. The maximum deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme will be enhanced from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh. As per the provisions under Rule 3 of SCSS 2019, voluntarily retired or retired on superannuation persons of 55 years of age and above can invest in SCSS, their retirement benefits, subject to a maximum of Rs 15 lakh. Further, retired personnel of Defence Services (excluding Civilian Defence Employees) on attaining the age of 50 years are also eligible to invest in SCSS. The Committee note that benefit under SCSS is already available to Government employees retiring at the age of 55 years and above and SCSS account can be extended for a further period of three years once only. The Department have informed that interest at the rate applicable to the Post Office Savings Account shall be payable on deposits in the SCSS account which are not extended on maturity.

Noting that the retirement benefits may be significantly larger than the amount of Rs. 30 lakh which is permitted under the SCSS, the Committee recommend that the Department should put forth a proposal to remove the limit on SCSS to enable the retired persons to invest a larger portion of their savings in post offices. The age limit of 55 years may also be relaxed for persons who take voluntary retirement at an earlier age. The Committee further recommend that the limitation on renewal of SCSS account may be removed.

It is apparent that MIS provides a steady monthly income to the retired account holders/housewives. The Department may also consider increasing the limit on MIS for single account and for joint account. The Department should also consider the possibility of sending reminders through SMS and emails to the SCSS

account holders on completion of term of the SCSS. The Committee are of the view that the subscriber base of the post office will increase substantially and the amount invested will increase commensurately. The Committee may be apprised of the progress made in this regard.”

21. The Department in their Action taken replies, had stated as under-

“Removing the limit on SCSS, relaxing age limit of 55 years for person taking voluntary retirement, increasing the limit on MIS for single and joint account holders etc. comes under the purview of DEA, MoF. DoP is only implementing organization for the POSB schemes. DoP will convey the advise of the Committee to the nodal ministry for next course of action.

SMS messages are sent to all the account holders including SCSS account holders in advance a month prior to the maturity of the account.”

Comments of the Committee

22. The Committee had recommended that the Department should put forth a proposal to remove the limit on SCSS to enable the retired persons to invest a larger portion of their savings in post offices. It was also recommended that age limit of 55 years may also be relaxed for persons who take voluntary retirement at an earlier age. The Committee had further recommended that the limitation on renewal of SCSS account may be removed. The Department have stated in their reply that the matter regarding removing the limit on SCSS, relaxing age limit of 55 years for person taking voluntary retirement, increasing the limit on MIS for single and joint account holders etc. comes under the purview of DEA, MoF. DoP is only an implementing organization for the POSB schemes. Further, it was added that the DoP will convey the advice of the Committee to the nodal Ministry for the next course of action. In this regard, the Committee would like to be apprised of the outcome.

Recommendation no. 11

Widening of the ambit of Post Office Savings Bank

23. The Committee, in their Original Report had recommended as under-

“The Committee note that the Post Office Savings Bank has time Deposits scheme with the maturity period of 1 year / 2 year / 3 year and 5 year, National Savings Certificates and KisanVikas Patra. Loan facility is not available on these deposits. The Department have also informed that the customer can avail loan from banks by pledging these deposits in the bank branch. In respect of Recurring Deposits, account holders can avail loan from the post office to the extent of 50% of balance in the RD account.

The Committee find it encouraging that Department of Posts has received a mandate from Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for opening approx 1.46 Crore accounts of PM KisanSamman Nidhi beneficiaries who are not able to receive Direct Benefit Transfer due to non-availability of Aadhaar seeded accounts. The mandate is received due to vast Distribution network of DOP along with trust on Postmen/GDS of the public in large. The Committee appreciate the efforts of IPPB with regard to opening up of more than 5 lakh PM KisanSamman Nidhi Beneficiary Accounts. Department of Financial Services (DFS), MOF, is the nodal Department/ Ministry for PMSBY (Pradhan Mantri Suraksha BimaYojana) and PMJJBY (Pradhan Mantri Jeevan JyotiBimaYojana) Schemes. These schemes are available through Banks and Post Offices. The eligible Post Office Savings Account holders can enrol under PMSBY and PMJJBY Schemes. 21.32 lakh have enrolled in PMSBY and 1.44 lakh in PMJJBY.

The Committee recommend that the Department may initiate the process of providing loan facility on term deposits and Monthly Income Scheme deposits which would provide additional flow of revenue to the Post office. The Department may examine the possibilities to work in coordination with Ministry of Agriculture &

Farmers Welfare to provide the services of Primary Agriculture Credit Society to the farmers at grass root level through the unparalleled reach and trust enjoyed by the Post Offices. The Department may also explore ways to popularize the PM KisanSamman Nidhi, PMSBY and PMJJBY to increase the subscriber base.”

24. The Department in their Action Taken Notes, had submitted as under-

“Term Deposits (TD), Monthly Income Scheme (MIS) and other POSB schemes come under the jurisdiction of DEA, MoF. DoP is only an implementing organization for the POSB schemes. Action, if any, regarding provision of loan facility on TD or MIS, comes entirely under the purview of DEA, MoF. Advise of the Committee will be shared with the nodal ministry for next course of action.

PM Kisan Samman Nidhi is being popularized by opening Savings Account of the beneficiaries through both IPPB and Post Office Savings Accounts. PMSBY and PMJJBY schemes are available to all Post Office Savings Accounts (POSA) holders. These schemes are being popularized in coordination with Department of Financial Services, the nodal ministry.”

Comments of the Committee

25. The Committee had recommended that the Department may initiate the process of providing loan facility on term deposits and Monthly Income scheme Deposits which would provide additional flow of revenue to the Post office. The Committee had recommended that the Department in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to provide the services of Primary Agriculture Credit Society to the farmers at grass root level through the unparalleled reach and trust enjoyed by the post offices. The Department has replied that it is only an implementing organization for the POSB schemes. Action, if any, regarding provision of loan facility

on TD or MIS, comes entirely under the purview of DEA, MoF. Department has also stated that advice of the Committee would be shared with the nodal ministry for next course of action. The Committee call upon the Department to update them in this regard.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation no. 1)

Budgetary Analysis

The Department of Posts (DoP) have laid the Demands for Grants (2023-24) in Lok Sabha on 8 February, 2023 for a total amount of Rs. 40533.38 crores consisting of Rs. 39156.43 crores under Revenue and Rs. 1396.96 crores under Capital. An analysis of the budgetary allocation during 2022-23 indicates that under Gross Expenditure, an amount of Rs. 35507.27 crore had been set at BE which was increased to Rs. 35592.83 crore at RE stage and the actual expenditure upto December 2022 has been Rs. 26212.85 crore. Under the Capital section, during the same period, an amount of Rs. 888.62 crore had been allocated at BE which was increased to Rs. 1494.02 crore and the actual utilization upto December 2022 has been Rs. 681.24 crore only. The Committee note that the gross expenditure of the Department has been gradually increasing over the years. The revenue expenditure was Rs. 29139.74 crore in 2019-20, Rs. 29261.46 crore in 2020-21 and Rs. 30924.06 crore in 2021-22. The capital expenditure was Rs. 730.56 crore in 2019-20, Rs. 897.41 crore in 2020-21 and Rs. 885.55 crore in 2021-22. Since the figures are till December, 2022, the Committee apprehend that the expenditure is likely to go up further as the financial year comes to a close. The Committee expect the Department to implement austerity measures which will ensure in bringing down the expenditure. The

Department may explore the possibility of acting as a facilitator for local level Self Help Groups and artisans and supplying their products to far flung areas to maximize the revenue and sustain itself in the long run.

Para 1 of 44th Report of the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology (17th Lok Sabha).

Reply of the Government

Keeping in view the objective of increasing the revenue, Department of Posts has entered into agreement with Government e-Market (GeM) whereby Department will pick-up the consignments from the door-steps of the GeM Sellers and transport it for delivery across the country. Department has also entered into agreements with 14 regional offices of Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) to pick-up the products made by the tribals in various parts of the country and deliver it to the buyers across the country. These business tie-ups will result in opening a pan India market for the small and medium traders and tribal artisans residing in remote rural areas and will also bring substantial revenue for Department of Posts.

Presently 122 DakNiryatKendras (DNKs) have been set up in the country which are proposed to be extended to 1000 locations in a phased manner. This step of the Department will lead in supporting export activities and generating revenue for the Department of Posts. Its specialized services, document processing, logistics support, customs collaboration and value added offerings may contribute to the financial sustainability of the Department while facilitating and promoting export trade.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

(Recommendation no. 2)

Revenue Receipts

The Committee note that the Revenue Receipts of the Department were Rs. 10632.50 crore in 2020-21 which marginally increased to Rs. 10860.80 crore in 2021-22. For the year 2022-23, the revenue receipts have been pegged at Rs. 7948.39 crore till December, 2022. The Department has set ambitious targets for the year 2023-24 and the BE for 2023-24 stands at Rs. 13439.38 crore. The Committee note that the Department is earning revenue from Speed Post, Business Post, Business Parcel, postage through franking machines, sale of stamps, philatelic ancillaries, Money Order (MO) and Indian Postal Orders (IPO), retail post, logistic post, e-bill collection, G2C services such as Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK), Aadhaar services, etc, receipts from other postal Administrations, savings bank and cash certificate remuneration etc.

Further, it is seen that several measures have been taken by the Department to achieve the targets during 2022-23 such as focus on Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) account opening; thrust on parcel business with tie-ups with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED), GeM, private e-commerce players; focus on IPPB, technology initiatives like ATM, E-banking, M-banking, National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), Core Banking Solution(CBS), CBS-CTS (Cheque Truncation System) integration, e-PAN validation, account opening and closure facility for National Savings Certificate, KisanVikas Patra, Recurring Deposit, Term Deposit and Public Provident Fund through internet banking, monitoring of targets, etc. Furthermore, the Department has adopted a three pronged strategy for increasing parcel business that includes improving the infrastructure and parcel handling capacity for smooth handling of the increased parcel volume, upgradation of the technology platform for improving the operational efficiency and meeting the customer expectations.

Apart from the above, a number of measures have been taken by the Department of Posts to achieve the revenue targets during FY 2022-23. These include establishment of four parcel hubs for exclusive and expeditious processing of parcels, four nodal delivery centres have been operationalised for expediting door step delivery of parcels in 2022-23 and 4 routes of postal road transport network have been

operationalised. Additional parcels handling capacity of 14.35 lakh parcel per annum has been created bringing the total capacity to 12.75 crore parcels per annum. Payment through UPI QR code has been implemented at all post offices counters. Cash on Delivery and Insurance charges have been reviewed and revised to meet the Courier, Express and Parcel Market Standards. 605 Parcel Packaging units have been established in selected post offices across the country and customer interface has been improved through MIS and Customer Relationship Management Portal.

The Committee observe that the focus areas in FY 2023-24 are doorstep pick-up and delivery services of parcels , agreement signed with GeM for pick up of consignments, agreement with National Handloom Development Corporation for providing them logistics support for supply of yarns, agreement with Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India and tie-up with Open Network for Digital Commerce for providing logistics solutions. Further steps have been taken for technology integration including 1.45 lakh mobile phones for delivery staff, new Application Programme Interface Integration facility, monitoring of performance of Speed Post , corporate customer specific MIS, CRM for bulk customers and so on. Single points of contact have been designated for corporate customers having monthly business of Rs. 10 lakh and above, registration process of bulk customer under Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) and National Account Facility (NAF) has been revised. There have been tie ups with the Election Commission of India and UIDAI, with Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for delivery of Unique Disability ID cards, with LIC, Govt of Rajasthan, delivery of Driving License, Registration Certificates, Traffic Challans and notices and so on. Given the credibility which the Department enjoys, the Committee opine that the initiatives w.r.t. doorstep pick- up and delivery services of parcels will definitely bring about significant changes in the Indian economy, apart from boosting the revenues to the Department.

The Committee appreciate the initiative of the Department in launching the new Parcel product 'Rail Post Gati Shakti Express Cargo Service' in collaboration with the

Indian Railways. This is to attract the new business for parcels weighing more than 35 kg in which the booking and delivery of the parcels will be undertaken by the Department of Posts whereas transmission of the parcels will be performed by Indian Railways. Further, the initiative taken w.r.t. packaging of parcels at the post office is praiseworthy and needs to be expanded to cover more post offices. The word of caution here is that the quality of packaging is to be ensured so as to have a sustainable consumer base, especially w.r.t. fragile items. The Department may also examine the feasibility of opening parcel booking counters at airports which could facilitate passengers to book their excess baggage at these counters instead of paying heavy costs for excess baggage that are currently being charged by the Airlines.

Reply of the Government

The availability of Parcel packaging services has now been further extended to more locations and is currently available at 697 Parcel Packaging Units (PPUs) in comparison to the earlier 605 PPUs. The Parcel Packaging materials of industry standards have been prescribed under the Parcel Packaging Policy and the procurement of prescribed quality is emphasized upon by the Department. Among other packaging materials such as corrugated boxes and flyers, inner filling materials such as bubble wrap, airbags, foam peanuts/pellets & shredded cardboard fillers have been prescribed under the Policy for keeping goods safe especially in respect of fragile items.

- Feasibility of opening of parcel booking counters at Airport to facilitate passengers to book their excess baggage was explored by Delhi Postal Circle. One counter is being operated by Delhi Postal Circle at IGI Airport, New Delhi and a parcel business of around Rs. 80 Lakh has been generated during the FY 2022-2023. In this respect, all Postal Circles where post offices are located in the departure halls / airport terminal buildings are being addressed to examine the feasibility of providing this service.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee
(Please see Para no. 7 of Chapter-I)

(Recommendation no. 3)

Revenue Deficit

The Committee note that the deficit of the Department has risen from Rs. 17695. 09 crores in 2020-21 to Rs. 18860.63 crore in 2021-22 . The deficit for the 2022-23 stands at Rs. 17423.69 crore till December, 2022. The Committee note that DOP has primarily two major components of gross expenditure: Salaries and Pensions, which constitute almost 92.34% of the gross expenditure. As seen, the expenditure pertaining to salary (Pay and allowances) is on the higher side due to implementation of revised pay and allowances as per 7th Pay Commission. Pensionary charges have also increased due to revision of pension of pre- 2006/ 2016 as per 7th pay commission. Number of pensioners has also increased during last few years. There is increase on account of Dearness Allowance/Dearness Relief (DA/DR). Further, in order to fulfill Universal Service Obligation, Post Offices in Rural areas are considered justified if they are able to cover 33.33% of the expenditure (15% in hilly/tribal areas) and in order to keep these offices operational, the necessary cost has to be incurred by the Department.

The Committee recognize that the post office brings a connect between Government objectives and banks' inabilities. The post office with its existing branch infrastructure extend complete banking solutions at almost negligible additional costs. The Universal Service Obligation of the Department translates that the Department has to carry out operations in rural and hilly/tribal areas by bearing its cost thus leading to high deficit.

It is apparent to the Committee that the post offices do enjoy a vital element of trust that is needed in ensuring usage of formal banking channel by the unbanked population that could be leveraged upon by the Government to obtain higher

effectiveness of the financial inclusion drive. The trust built up can also be helpful in selling micro credit and investments like recurring deposits and micro SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) in mutual funds. The importance of post office in executing Government's financial initiatives cannot be debated. The Committee recommend that the Department implement measures which would enable it to decrease the revenue deficit to the extent possible.

Reply of the Government

Department has introduced various Citizen Centric Services in last few years such as Aadhaar Enrolment/Updation facility in Post Offices, Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs) and India Post Passenger Reservation System which has not only provided convenience to the citizens but also increased DoP's revenue. Further, a new service has recently been introduced by the Department of Posts under the name Magazine Postw.e.f. 01.04.2022 where features such as track and trace facility is provided for all magazines posted through the Postal channel.

Department is making all efforts through postal circles to open maximum number of POSB accounts so as to provide customer centric services to account holders all over the country, which will also generate revenue for the Department.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

(Recommendation no. 4)

IT Induction and Modernisation

The Committee note that IT Modernization Project of Department of Posts is being undertaken with a total outlay of Rs. 4909 crores. The Project involves computerization

and Modernization and networking of ~ 1, 59,000 Post Offices in the country, including ~ 1, 44,000 Branch Post Offices in rural areas run by the GraminDakSevaks. The project involves providing Central Server based integrated, modular and scalable solution for all the operations of Department of Posts including Mails, Human Resource, Banking, Insurance and Finance & Accounts. It also involves creation of IT Infrastructure like Data Centre, Disaster Recovery Centre, setting up of a Wide Area Network (WAN) and providing solar powered and portable hand-held computing devices (Micro ATM compliant) to all the Branch Post Offices. The Committee note that the actual expenditure during 2022-23 on the project is Rs. 567.90 crore on IT 1.0 and Rs. 8.64 crore on IT 2.0. An amount of Rs. 275.65 crore has been allocated to IT 1.0 and Rs. 653.02 crore has been allocated to IT 2.0 in BE 2023-24. The objectives of the IT modernization project of Department of Posts are modernization and computerization of all the non-computerized Post offices in the country including GraminDakSevak (GDS) Branch Post offices in rural areas, mail offices, administrative and other offices; Development of scalable, integrated and modular software covering all operations of the Department of Posts; Establishment of required IT Infrastructure including Data Centre, Wide Area Network (WAN) based networking of the departmental post offices; and DARPAN - RICT (Digital Advancement of Rural Post Offices for a New India-Rural Information Communication Technology (Rural ICT) infrastructure. The Project is implemented through eight different segments: Data Centre Facility (DCF), Network Integrator (NI), Financial Services System Integrator (FSI), Core System Integrator (CSI), Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for A New India (DARPAN) - Rural System Integrator (RSI) and Rural Hardware (RH), Mail Operations Hardware (MOH), and Change Management (CM).

With the implementation of IT Modernisation project, all Post Offices will be able to improve their quality of services and increase their productivity on account of improved IT system. Increase in access to the post office through web portal, mobile and call centers would give better services to the customers. Number of transactions in postal, banking, insurance and retail activities of the post office are likely to increase as the reach of these services will be extended through IT Modernisation. Computerization

of all the post offices with central data architecture will create an enabling environment for mail track and trace and other web based and mobile based services. Reduction in paper work, particularly in administrative and accounts offices and accessibility of information from centralized database will enable improved decision making and responsive administration. The main activities prioritized by the Department under the scheme are Postal and Logistics, IT infrastructure, Network (inclusive of the North East component), Data Center and disaster recovery system, Security, Field infra (inclusive of the North East component), Enterprise Fraud Risk Management etc. Appreciating the efforts being made by the Department, the Committee would like to emphasise that the works undertaken in this regard may be completed as envisaged and in a time bound manner.

Further, the Committee find that the objective of DOP IT 2.0 is to provide inclusive, integrated single-window view of postal and financial services to its stakeholders through multiple delivery channels using re-engineered processes and cutting-edge Information Technologies, leading towards an era of e-Governance. Overall benefit will be to the customers and stake holders through more reliable, speedy operations and transparent availability of information to the customers.

The Committee are of the view that IT modernization has indeed become a vital and integral part of every business plan of any Department or Organization. For the Department of Posts with its vast network and multifarious services, the importance of IT Induction and Modernisation can hardly be overemphasized. The Committee desire that the Department ensures proper implementation of this Scheme and improves operational efficiencies.

Reply of the Government

The objective of DoP IT 2.0 is to provide inclusive, integrated single-window view of postal and financial services to its stakeholders through multiple delivery channels using re-engineered processes and cutting –edge Information Technologies, leading towards an

era of e-Governance. Overall benefit will be to the customers and stake holders through more reliable, speedy operations and transparent availability of information to the customers.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee
(Please see Para 10 of Chapter-I)

(Recommendation no. 5)

Estates Management – pending projects, accessibility issues and gender concerns

The Committee note that the key objective of the Estates Management Scheme is to ensure development of an appropriate infrastructure to provide a congenial work environment and improve the delivery of postal services in a cost effective way for the benefit of the customers. The Scheme includes construction of postal buildings including Post Offices, mail offices, administrative offices, staff quarters, besides preservation and conservation of heritage buildings and reconstruction of dilapidated buildings. The Scheme also includes construction of additional toilets in existing buildings, installation of Roof Top Solar Power Packs and Rain Water Harvesting structures to contribute towards Sustainable Development Goals. Providing ramps and rails under the Sugama Bharat Abhiyan for improving the accessibility of Post Offices for differently abled persons is also a part of this scheme. The actual utilization during 2022-23 has been Rs. 22.32 crores which is less than a third of the RE of Rs. 70.10 crores. This is indicative of lack of proper planning and implementation.

The Committee further note that the major impediments being encountered in the implementation of the Scheme include not getting timely approval from Municipal Corporations and other State Government authorities for starting construction process, cancellation of tendering process due to single/high bidding, non-settlement of litigation process/court cases pertaining to the land owned by the Department and encroachment on Departmental vacant lands. The Committee do appreciate the efforts made by the Department to address these problems. These *inter alia* include preparation of a list of projects for construction and renovation of postal buildings to be taken up in FY 2023-24 which has been shared with all the Circles with the instruction to complete all the preconstruction formalities by 31.03.2023 so that work can be awarded in April 2023 itself, thereby ensuring optimum utilization of funds. The Circles have also been advised to depute officers to liaise with the local authorities and State Government authorities to expedite requisite approval. Priority is being given for completion of pending projects.

The Committee further note that the Department had submitted its proposal to Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation (MOSPI) vide DO letter dated 26.12.2022 to allow the MPLAD funds to be used for estate management of Department of Posts. The same has been approved by Mo SPI in the revised guidelines on MPLADS issued on 22nd February, 2023. The Committee would like to be apprised in this regard.

Further, the Committee note that presently Department is not earning any rentals for its estates. The Committee would like to draw the attention of the Department w.r.t. existing guidelines of the Department of Posts which deals with renting out excess built up space wherein rent revision is provided for at the rate of 10% per annum after every 03 years. The Committee would like to urge the Department to explore this wherever feasible.

With respect to pending projects, the Committee note that work has commenced on Poojappura and Karamana post offices but the work on Sasthamangalam post office in Kerala is yet to begin. The Committee had advised the Department to speed up work on the three projects in their 22nd, 28th, 33rd and 40th Reports and note that the post offices have not been made operational as yet. The Committee therefore emphasise that the Department must make all efforts to complete the work in the next FY. The Committee would like to prevail on the Department to expedite the works w.r.t. these pending projects.

Regarding the facilities for new post office buildings, one of the mandatory provisions has been the construction of ladies toilets. It is seen that in 2022-23 (upto December, 2022), a total of 36 ladies toilets had been constructed in new postal buildings and 21 had been constructed in old buildings where separate facilities were not available for the ladies. These figures reflect very poorly with respect to providing basic amenities to the vast work force. It is seen that funds have been allocated to Estates Division under Gender Concern. Further, with regard to providing other facilities, the Committee found that during the last three years, 383 ramps/railings, 80 adaptive rest rooms and only 1 Braille signage were constructed. The Committee note that only 21 Access Audits have been conducted in the last five years. From the foregoing, the

Committee find that the progress made by the Department in addressing gender concerns and inclusive buildings is minuscule when compared to the mammoth size of the Department. The funds allocated to address Gender concern must be utilized optimally and judiciously. The Department ought to strive to provide facilities to their women workforce which *inter- alia* include separate ladies toilets, provision for crèches in the post office and so on. The Committee recommend that inclusiveness may be made mandatory for the design of all post office buildings in future and the guidelines for the design of all new buildings may be revised to aim at access for the differently abled to fulfil the objectives of the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan. The post office personnel may be sensitized to their specific needs and retrofitting of the existing buildings may be done on a regular basis. The Committee stress that access audits may be conducted periodically for the post offices and the Committee be informed of the progress in the matter.

The Committee recommend that priority may be accorded to the projects that have been pending for a long time and to those which cater to population still not covered by the reach of a post office. The efforts made by the Department for acquiring funds from the MPLAD are praiseworthy and the Committee hope that the MPLAD funds will be utilised in order to expedite pending projects and start new ones. The Department may also consider the feasibility of renting out its estates and utilizing vacant land through Build-Operate-Transfer Model and earn revenue in the process. The Committee may be apprised of the progress in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Actual utilization of funds under Estates Management Scheme during the year 2022-23 has been Rs.68.62 Crore out of Rs. 70.10 Crore allotted in the year and not Rs. 22.32 Crore. The percentage utilization comes to 97.8%.

In view of the revised guidelines on MPLADS issued by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) which has come into effect from 1.4.2023, Department of Posts has been included therein.

The present status of post office building construction project at Poojappura, Karmana and Sasthamangalam and their likely dates of completion are as under:

Sr. No.	Project	Present Status
1	Karamana	External plastering and work of back side retaining wall in progress. Project likely to be completed in current financial year.
2	Poojappura	Plinth beam reinforcement and shuttering work over. Project likely to be completed by September, 2024.
3	Sasthamangalam	Foundation earth work in progress. Project likely to be completed by December, 2024.

Provision of separate ladies toilets has been made an integral part of the design of new post offices being constructed. In Financial Year 2022-23 50 ladies toilets have been constructed in new postal buildings. 57 ladies toilets and 2 retiring rooms were also constructed during FY 2022-23 in old buildings where separate facilities were not available for the ladies. Funds of Rs. 1.20 Crore have been allotted for construction of 60 ladies toilets and Rs. 30 Lakh for construction of 30 feeding rooms for ladies during the year 2023-24.

Construction of rails and ramps are mandatory for all new buildings being constructed in the Department of Posts to ensure easy accessibility for differently-abled persons and senior citizens. Rs.1 Crore have been allotted for retrofitting in 50 post offices with ramps & rails during the current financial year. Directions have been issued to make braille signages integral part of new buildings being constructed. Funds of Rs. 50 lakh have been allotted to install braille signages in 500 post offices in the year 2023-24.

Instructions have been issued to all the Circles to conduct bi-annual access audits of all the post offices and to set up a monitoring committee for the implementation of the accessibility norms in accordance with the Rights of Person With Disabilities Act, 2016 *vide* letter dated 12.05.2022 and reiterated vide 03.05.2023.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee
(Please see Para 13 of Chapter I)
(Recommendation no. 7)

Dormant Accounts

The Committee note that 136.96 crore mature unclaimed certificates were lying with the Department with a value of Rs. 7703.34 crores in 2020-21. During 2021-22, 155.84 lakh such certificates were lying unclaimed with a value of Rs. 9239.20 crores. The Committee also note that the Department takes proactive measures to contact the beneficiaries of such unclaimed/ dormant saving certificates and the number of beneficiaries/legal heirs/nominees contacted during the last three years and the amount repaid to them. In accordance with the instructions contained in SB order No. 8/2019 dated 13.09.2019, all types of unclaimed accounts/certificates in small savings schemes are identified centrally and frozen. Circles then download list of such accounts pertaining to the Post Offices falling under their jurisdiction and shares the same with the concerned Post Offices. The concerned Post Office places the list on the Notice Board meant for public and tries to contact each of the account holder of the unclaimed account by all reasonable means at least two times within a span of sixty days of placing the list on the notice board. Door to door campaign and special drives are carried out at Divisional/Regional/Circle level for settlement of such unclaimed accounts. Periodical monitoring through Video Conferencing is also being done at Directorate level. With the combined effort by all

Circles 2142923 accounts with an amount of Rs. 1206.73 Cr have been settled till Dec-2022.

The Committee note that nomination has been made mandatory w.e.f. 18.12.2019 for all the accounts being opened and restriction in system has also been implemented for opening account without nomination. The Committee are all praises for the efforts undertaken by the Department in settlement of dormant accounts and exhort that they should continue their efforts with renewed vigor so as to find the legal heirs of the deceased persons. Following the practice of nomination at the time of opening of accounts and renewing the KYCs every other year will ensure to keep the number of dormant accounts to a minimum. Restoring the amounts to the legal heirs/nominees will lead to restoration of faith and credibility in the organization. It is apparent that there may be a large number of accounts in POSB opened prior to December, 2019 without any nomination. The post office needs to assume a proactive role and encourage these account holders through push notifications via SMS, email and ensure that no account remains without a nomination. The progress made in quantifiable terms may be apprised to the Committee.

Reply of the Government

When the account holder of an account without nomination approaches a Post Office for any transaction in the account, the account holder is encouraged by the concerned Post Office to submit his/her nomination for the account. All possible steps are being taken to ensure no account remains without a nomination. The number of accounts with nomination as on 31.12.2019 was 12.24 crore, which as on 31.03.2023 has increased to 23.85 crore, which is a coverage of more than 92% of the total live accounts of 25.85 crore as on 31.03.2023. During the Financial Year 2022-23 i.e. from 01.04.2022 to 31.03.2023, nominations were registered in 4.61 crore accounts.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

(Recommendation no. 8)

Post Office Common Service Centres

The Committee note that Common Service Centre (CSC) services in the country are being provided in 1,21,133 post offices, which includes 22,382 departmental post offices and 98,751 branch post offices in rural areas. The Committee have also been informed that 1,38,906 postal employees (35,162 Departmental employees and 1,03,744 Gramin Dak Sevaks) have been trained to provide CSC Services through Post Offices. Incentives payable to Post Office staff and GDS is linked with revenue generated on the transactions made by them on CSC platform. Existing infrastructure of the Post Office is used for providing CSC services whereas in the rural Branch Post Offices, employees have option either to use Departmental infrastructure or bring their own infrastructure for providing CSC services. In case employee provides infrastructure, he is paid double the incentive as applicable in other case i.e. when infrastructure is provided by the Department.

The Committee also note that in Post Offices, CSC Services are provided by the postal staff in addition to their own duties and by utilizing existing infrastructure. No additional expenditure is incurred by the Department of Posts in providing CSC services at Post Office counters. Revenue earned for transactions conducted on CSC platform related to Common Service Centre services is shared between CSC-SPV and Department of Posts in the ratio of 20:80. The revenue earned by the Department during 2020-21 was Rs. 7,45,351.39 which increased to Rs. 38,87,621.46 in 2021-22. During 2022-23, the amount had risen to Rs. 59,23,788.58 till December, 2022. The Department have submitted that 81 services are being provided that are related to Digital Seva Portal, election, labour service, pension, employment service, e-District, Bharat Bill Payment system, G2C and B2C services like Tour and Travels, FASTag, educational, financial services and utility services.

The Committee also note that in case of deficiency in the quality of CSC Services or any other issues related to CSC services in Post Offices viz. overcharging etc, customers can complain to the Postmaster/ Divisional Heads for redressal of their grievances, in a manner similar to other postal services provided at Post Offices.

The Committee have also been informed that the CSC services provided through Post Offices are dependent upon a number of factors viz. power supply, internet connectivity, demand for such services and availability of service providers on CSC platform to offer their services. CSC Services in Post Offices are provided through existing infrastructure of the Post Offices. In departmental post offices the existing Desktop PC, Printer, Scanner and Internet Connectivity are used for providing CSC Services where as in Branch Post Offices, the mobile handset given to the Postmaster by Department or Postmaster's own device is used for providing CSC Services. CSC – SPV provides access to their online portal (digitalseva.csc.gov.in) for delivery of CSC Services through Post Offices. CSC also provides training to postal staff and other backend technological support required for delivery of CSC Services.

The Committee note that during April to December, 2022, 9,30,322 transactions were carried out at PO-CSCs. The Committee understand that the post offices have utilized their existing manpower and infrastructure to provide the much needed services to the remote areas of the country thereby earning revenue in the process. The Committee desire that monitoring of the display /notice boards/rate-charts at PO-CSCs may be micro-managed at the post office level and the Branch Postmaster may be responsible for the same. Notwithstanding, CSC e-governance private Limited Company can not absolve itself of the responsibility. The Committee find this aspect baffling and impress upon the Ministry to fix accountability of CSC company as well. The Committee also find that data related to number of services provided by PO-CSCs appear to be inconsistent, given the fact that the Department has submitted different figures before the Committee in their written replies on different occasions. The Department may, therefore, collate the information about the exact quantum of services provided by the

PO-CSCs as compared to what is enumerated in the MoU and report any glaring disparities to the Committee.

Besides, a dedicated helpline along with an email ID with a customer service team may be deployed for grievance redressal where the complaints lodged may be connected to a complaint management system with a turnaround time of 7 days. The Committee recommend that an appellate authority with an ombudsman at the helm may be appointed for monitoring the grievance redressal. The Committee further note with the concern that CSC is a private limited company having one golden share of the Government, has been gaining works purely on the basis of nomination and not on competitive bidding.

The Committee note that the services provided by CSC are primarily focused on Mobile recharge and electricity bill payments which reflects the myopic view of the CSC management. The share of the transactions of G2C services like agriculture insurance, filing of income tax returns and land record forms etc. is abysmally low and apparently points to the lack of promotion on part of CSC and the resultant lack of awareness of the target populace. The Committee have also learned that the CSC company has only focused on providing online training to the operators. The Committee, therefore, emphasise that the CSC should conspicuously display the full list of services provided and provide hands on training in both online and physical mode to the operators on a regular basis. The Committee further note that the revenue earned by the PO-CSCs is approximately Rs. 48.90 per CSC during the FY 2022-23 which is astoundingly low and necessitates that the PO-CSCs should widen their ambit to cover more services for revenue. The Committee further recommend that the CSC should play a wider role in spread of internet connectivity to the Gram Panchayats and inform the Committee of the progress made in terms of connections provided.

The Committee conclude that the Department of Posts are self –sufficient in terms of human resource and may examine the feasibility of managing the entire ecosystem of CSC in the country. The infrastructure of the Gram Panchayats may be

utilized and the DakKarmayogi portal may be used for providing training on CSC services to the postal employees. The amalgamation would result in increased reach of the post offices by utilizing the doorstep service model of the IPPB and would prove gainful to the Department. The Committee emphasise the Department to explore this possibility and apprise them of the progress in this regard.

Reply of the Government

E-learning content is being developed for enrichment of knowledge of postal officials for better implementation of Common Service Centre services through postal network.

Presently, Common Service Centre (CSC) related services are being provided through 1,25,640 post offices in the country, which includes 23,077 Departmental Post Offices and 1,02,563 Branch Post Offices. A total of 1,46,154 postal employees (36,972 Departmental Employees and 1,09,182 GraminDakSevaks) have been trained to provide CSC services through post offices. During FY 2022-23, 11,85,432 CSC transactions were carried out through post offices resulting in revenue generation of Rs.76,86,912 for Department of Posts.

Postal Circles have been instructed to display notice boards indicating provision of CSC related services in post offices where CSC services are being provided. Monitoring of the notice boards depicting the details of CSC Services being provided at post office counters is done at the Postmaster and Divisional Superintendent level. Field units of CSC-SPV and Postal Circles have been instructed to promote and publicize citizen-centric CSC services being provided through post offices, with special focus on Government-to-Customer (G2C) services provided through post offices. Training to post office staff on CSC related services is being provided on regular basis through physical as well as online mode by CSC-SPV.

Customers can register their grievances with the Postmaster/ Divisional Heads for redressal of their CSC related grievance, in a manner similar to other postal services

being provided through post offices. There is provision of a toll free number and raising tickets on Digital Seva Portal of CSC for grievance handling.

A total of 80 CSC services are being provided through post offices (Annexure-I). The number of CSC citizen centric services provided through post office counters is dynamic, wherein the number of CSC services will increase or decrease in the Digital Seva Portal, as and when CSC expands or curtails its tie-up with Government to Citizen(G2C) and Business to Citizen(B2C) service providers.

G2C services comprising of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (Ayushman Bharat), Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana (PM-SYM), e-shram registrations, passport services, National Pension Scheme, FASTAG, PAN Card etc. are available in all the post offices providing CSC related services. During FY 2022-23, a total of 11.85 lakhs CSC related transactions were done in post offices, out of which 24% of the transactions pertained to services like insurance renewals, PAN applications, passport applications, farmer registrations under PM-KISAN and PMFBY and e-shram registrations. Other CSC services like mobile recharge and bill payments, being recurring in nature, constituted for around 60% of total transactions.

Under IT Modernization Project 2.0 of Department of Posts, One User Interface (One UI) will be developed, which will be the integrated front end interface for all users of department. The One UI along with the doorstep service delivery model of India Post Payment Bank (IPPB) will be utilized for providing G2C and B2C services to citizens, particularly in rural areas.

Annexure-I

List of CSC Services provided through Post Office

Digital Seva Portal	81. PAN card
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	82. Passport
	83. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
	84. PM AwasYojana
	85. Soil Health Card
	86. Pradhan MantriFasalBimaYojna
	87. PDS
	88. FSSAI License Application
	89. FSSAI Registration Certificate
	90. Birth/ Death Certificate
	91. Ayushman Bharat Yojna
	92. PM Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Pension Yojana
	93. Jeevan Pramaan
	94. IRCTC ticket Booking
Election	95. Voter Registration Form-6
	96. deletion of Name Form-7
	97. Modifications or Corrections Form-8, 8A
	98. Voter PVC Card Print
	99. Modification to Voter details
Labour Service	100. Labour Services
	101. Labour Certificate
	102. Labour Registration
Pension	103. National Pension Scheme (NPS)
	104. Swavalamban Contribution
Employment Service	105. Navy Recruitment
	106. Job Seekers Registration
	107. Application Form Submission
<u>State Government Services</u>	
e-District /SSDG (State)	108. Haryana eDistrict Services

	109.	MP State Services
	110.	West Bengal eDistrict Services
	111.	Maharashtra State Services
	112.	Karnataka eDistrict Services
	113.	Jharkhand eDistrict Service
	114.	UttarakhandeDistrict Service
	115.	Chhattisgarh eDistrict Services
	116.	Puducherry eDistrict Services
	117.	Himachal Pradesh PanchParaman
	118.	Daman & Diu
	119.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli
	120.	AP RTA Services
	121.	eVahan Jammu & Kashmir
	122.	Himachal SwasthyaBimaYojana (HIMCARE)
	123.	Tamil Nadu PDS Card Printing
Other G2C Services	124.	Sarathi
	125.	E-Challan
	126.	eStamp
	127.	E-Vahan – Transport Services
Bharat Bill Payment System	128.	BBPS Mobile Postpaid
	129.	BBPS DTH
	130.	BBPS Landline Postpaid
	131.	BBPS Electricity
	132.	BBPS Broadband Postpaid
	133.	BBPS Water
	134.	BBPS Gas

<u>B2C</u>	
Tour & Travels	135. Flight Ticket
	136. Bus Ticket
	137. e- Recharge (Mobile &DTH)
	138. SBlePay Maharashtra Transport
	139. SBlePay Maharashtra eGRAS
	140. SBlePay Maharashtra Nursing
	141. RashtrapathiBhavan Museum Ticket
FASTag	142. FASTAG Issuance
	143. FASTAG Purchase
	144. FASTAG Top up
	145. FASTAG Service
Educational Services	146. NIELIT Facilitation Centre
	147. Tally Software Registration
	148. ITI Registration
	149. Course Registration
	150. Online Admission
	151. CAD Registration
	152. Scholarships
<u>Financial Services</u>	
Banking Services	153. Acceptance of Loan applications
	154. EMI collections
Insurance	155. Life Insurance (Renewal)
	156. General Insurance (Renewal)
<u>Utility Services</u>	
IT Return	157. GST Return

	158.	TDS Return
	159.	DSC
	160.	LLP Registration

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 19 of Chapter-I)

(Recommendation no. 10)

Expansion of role of postmen

During the examination of the Demands for Grants (2023-24), a concern was raised by the Committee that the Jan Dhan account holders covered by an insurance of Rs. 2 lakhs are not receiving the amount that is due to them in case of any claims arising. The Committee also flagged the issue that no receipt is provided for the premium paid by the account holders who then face problems in insurance claims.

The Committee note that the Department of Financial Services (DFS) is the nodal Department for Jan Dhan Accounts and infer that the DFS can collaborate with Department of Posts for facilitation of insurance claim settlement of the Jan Dhan Account holders through nearby post offices. The postmen who are entrusted with delivery in the rural post offices may be given additional responsibility of reaching out to families who are the beneficiaries of insurance by virtue of being Jan Dhan Account holders. The Department may look into ways to facilitate the insurance claims related to PLI/RPLI through postmen as they enjoy unparalleled reach with the local population. The Committee call upon the Department to see the feasibility of mandatorily posting postmen with the requisite skills in the local dialect/language in remote areas so as to preclude any language conflicts. The Committee emphasise that the Department may

collaborate with the Gram Panchayats and collate the data of insured Jan Dhan Account holders to further streamline the claim process.

Reply of the Government

The Department of Posts provides facilities for convenient payment of PLI/RPLI claim amount to the insurant or claimant in both urban and rural areas.

2. The amount of claim is credited directly into the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) accounts of the policyholders. It can subsequently be withdrawn at their doorstep through DARPAN device (Digital Advancement of Rural Post-Office for A New India device) brought by GraminDakSevaks/Branch Postmasters.

3. In addition, the Branch Post Office itself is located within the village, and is thus easily accessible to all the residents of that particular village as well as neighbouring villages. In India, there are around 1.5 lakh post offices serving 6 lakh villages, ie one Post Office for every 20.64 sq. km.

4. Moreover, the said services have been further strengthened and improved in the following ways: -

a. The PLI (Postal Life Insurance) CPC (Central Processing Centre), which is generally located at the Head Post Office are processing PLI/RPLI maturity as well as death claim cases. The claim amount through cheque is then sent through Registered Post to the insurant/claimant at no additional cost.

b. Thereafter an insurant/claimant directly can withdraw the same in cash through postman at their doorstep by AEPS (Aadhar Enabled Payment System) facility or get the amount transferred anywhere in India through e-banking and m-banking facilities.

c. PLI/RPLI maturity or death claim forms can also be submitted by an insurant/claimant through any of the Branch Post Offices in the country or indexed through DARPAN device and these are sent the same day to the Head Post Office/Account Office for further processing.

d. There is a provision for sending a notification two months before the date of maturity of a policy to the policy holder, either through sms or as a letter delivered by the postman to the insurant, to enable him/her to submit the claim documents in advance and receive the maturity amount on time.

Knowledge of local language of the concerned State or Union Territory is one of the educational qualification required for appointment to the post of Postmen as per the provisions of the recruitment rules.

The Department of Financial Services (DFS), MoF, is the Nodal Department for Jan Dhan Accounts. Action, if any, regarding collaboration with Department of Posts comes entirely under the purview of DFS, MoF. It is also added that DFS has not made provision for providing Jan Dhan Accounts through Post Offices and the same is available through banks only.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

CHAPTER- III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF
THE REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

-NIL-

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND REQUIRE REITERATION

(Recommendation no. 6)

India Post Payments Bank

According to the budgetary allocations, the Committee note that the BE for 2022-23 was Rs. 200 crore for IPPB and the RE was double that of the BE i.e. Rs. 400 crore. For the 2023-24, the BE is Rs. 250 crore. The Committee note that India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been setup with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India, leveraging the last mile reach and penetration of the Postal network. IPPB has 650 branches/controlling offices, almost one in each district in the country. IPPB has enabled 1.38 lakh Post Offices (including 1.10 lakh in rural areas) to provide Banking services at the counters. IPPB has also equipped nearly 1.89 lakh Postmen and GraminDakSevaks with smartphone and biometric device to provide Doorstep Banking Services.

The Committee observe that IPPB has established an interoperable banking infrastructure for the public good contributing towards changing the financial inclusion landscape in India and address the last mile needs of the banking industry at large to provide doorstep services to the customers of ANY BANK through the Postmen and GraminDakSevaks, leading to an increase in rural banking infrastructure by almost 2.5 times. The Bank has a customer base of 6.2 Cr customers, of which 75% are in Rural areas and 47% of the customers are Women.

The Committee note that powered by Aadhaar based eKYC., IPPB has ensured instant account opening with no manual intervention, especially for the rural population who may not possess the required documents prescribed by the Banking ecosystem to become part of the formal financial ecosystem. The IPPB-DoP combine has created a Physical Platform for Rural India enabled to provide Universal Services that has embedded Financial Services with Govt. Services through collaboration of Fintechs,

Government and institutions in banking ecosystem, thus providing a multitude of Citizen relevant services at the last mile.

The Committee understand that the IPPB has an Objective of Financial Inclusion in a cost effective way and to remove barriers to access basic financial services by the common man especially in the unbanked and underbanked areas. The IPPB have set ambitious targets (for 2023-24) of 1.59 lakh IPPB Access Points and 7.2 crore Cumulative Account Acquisition with measures like increased linkage of IPPB and POSA accounts to promote acquisition and customer balances. India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has enabled 1.38 lakh Post Offices to provide Banking services and has equipped nearly 1.89 lakh Postmen and GraminDakSevaks with a Smartphone and biometric device to provide doorstep banking services.

The Committee note that Department has approached RBI seeking relaxation for rolling out IPPB services in remaining post offices without submitting proposal under Annual Banking Outlet Expansion Plan to RBI. Apart from this, hiring for vacant post of GraminDakSevak Branch Postmasters (GDS BPMs) have been expedited which would enable IPPB to roll out IPPB services in these Branch Post Offices. Regular interaction with all telecom service providers including BSNL is being undertaken to provide mobile connectivity in the technically not feasible locations. As a result, IPPB services have been provided in more than 2600 post offices in 2022-23. IPPB services will be enabled in remaining 21000 post offices by 2023-24.

Apparently, the Payment Bank business model provides limited avenues for revenue generation. The Committee find it encouraging that the IPPB has identified alternate revenue streams like G2C services to balance the revenue mix. There has been a consistent increase in the Bank's revenue in the past 2 years in spite of the onset of the pandemic. There has been a reduction in the net loss over the quarters through control of fixed expenses and discretionary expenditure.

The Committee have been informed that the Department vide D.O. letter dated 16.06.2021 had requested RBI to examine the possibility of relaxing the eligibility conditions for Small Finance Bank licensing. However, RBI expressed its inability to accede to Department's request. Department has once again approached RBI to reconsider conversion of IPPB into Small Finance Bank and the response from RBI is awaited.

The Committee observe that the key to revenue is enhanced CASA (Current Account & Savings Account) balance as IPPB earn direct revenue on CASA balance. Fresh acquisition along with Post Office Savings Accounts (POSA) linkage is key to improve CASA Balance. Further Premium Acquisition, Aadhaar Seeded Acquisition, Child Enrolment Lite Client (CELC) and Life & General Insurance lead generation/sell are the other sources of revenue generation in IPPB. Lauding the efforts of the Department, the Committee urge the Department to make concerted efforts to remove all restrictions on the revenue streams and widen the scope of IPPB into a Small Finance bank. This would enable it to offer loans and increase its revenue and thereby increase its profitability. The Committee may be informed of the progress made in the direction.

Reply of the Government

As desired by the Committee, the progress made by India Post Payments Bank as on date are as under:-

- c) IPPB has enabled 1.43 lakh Post Offices (including 1.27 lakh in rural areas) to provide Banking services at the counters. IPPB has also equipped nearly 1.89 lakh Postmen and GraminDakSevaks with smartphones and biometric devices to provide Doorstep Banking Services.
- d) Key achievements:
- More than 6.76 Cr customers have opened accounts with IPPB
 - 78% of customers are in Rural areas
 - 47% of customers are women
 - 9.5+ Cr customers of ANY Bank provided cash delivery at their doorstep
 - More than ₹ 6200 Crs customer deposits

- Enabled more than 17 Cr UPI transactions per month
 - 2.79 Cr+ Customers with Aadhaar seeding in IPPB a/c to receive DBT benefits
 - More than 1.91 Cr customers received DBT/Social Welfare benefits
 - More than ₹ 14000 Cr Social Benefits disbursed to customers
 - More than 5.75 Cr customers provided with Aadhaar-based Government to Citizen services e.g., Child enrolment, Mobile number update & Doorstep Jeevan Praman Patra.
 - Bank covered more than 25 Lac individuals under ‘Insurance for All’ by enabling them with Group Accidental Guard General Insurance.
 - More than 15 Lac PM KISAN beneficiary account has been opened in this FY 2022-23. More than 34 Lakh PM KisanSamman Nidhi disbursement with IPPB.
 - IPPB and DoP in coordination with IEPFA have launched the NiveshakDidi program on 28th Oct, 2022 in J&K.
- g) DoP-IPPB is able to provide Financial Banking coverage to over 5.50-Lac villages basis out of the approx 6 lacs villages.
- h) IPPB has collaborated with various ministries and State Govts for providing citizen centric services like Digital Life Certificates, Aadhaar services (Mobile Number update). In addition, IPPB is working towards onboarding street vendors under the PMSVANIDHI program with MoHUA, providing Aadhaar based verification for PM KISAN beneficiaries with Ministry of Agriculture.

i) Business Performance YoY Growth

Particulars	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
Customer Accounts (cumulative)	2.37 Cr	4.29 Cr	5.18 Cr	6.63 Cr
Customer Deposits Rs(cumulative)	855.05 Cr	2300 Cr	3692 Cr	6292 Cr
Financial txn No.	5.14 Cr	21.01 Cr	67.11 Cr	144.67 Cr
Financial Txns Value (Rs)	14,152 Cr	59,299 Cr	100,939 Cr	164,327 Cr
Average Balance per customer (Rs)	360.78	536	713	949

- j) IPPB has shown substantial growth on a YoY basis registering a growth of 63%. Bank will break even within 7 years by FY 2024-25.

Particulars	FY 2019-20 (Audited)	FY 2020-21 (Audited)	FY 2021-22 (Audited)	FY 2022-23 (Provisional)	% Increase FY 22-23 over FY 21-22
Interest Income	45.76	80.44	128.46	278.87	117%
Transactional Income	7.06	129.62	329.87	464.73	41%
Other Income	1.94	2.98	2.87	7.39	157%
Total Revenue	54.76	213.04	461.20	750.99	63%
Interest Expenses	13.6	45.91	71.12	94.01	32%
Salary	264.29	283.22	296.35	269.40	-9%
Operating Expenses	223.23	210.8	263.20	361.91	38%
Total Expenses	501.12	539.93	630.67	725.32	15%
Operating Profit/ Loss	-446.36	-326.89	-169.47	25.67	-115%

Growth Factors

1. Enhanced Business lines leading to stable revenue streams
2. Focused approach towards Revenue earning services
3. Resource Productivity through constant engagement & training
4. Expense control for Bottom line improvement

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee
(Please see Para 16 of Chapter-I)

CHAPTER V
OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF
WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE INTERIM IN NATURE

(Recommendation no. 9)

Monthly Income Scheme and Senior Citizens Savings Scheme

The Committee note that as per the Budget Announcement of 2023-24, the maximum deposit limit for Monthly Income Scheme will be enhanced from Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 9 lakh for single account and from Rs 9 lakh to Rs 15 lakh for joint account. The maximum deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme will be enhanced from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh. As per the provisions under Rule 3 of SCSS 2019, voluntarily retired or retired on superannuation persons of 55 years of age and above can invest in SCSS, their retirement benefits, subject to a maximum of Rs 15 lakh. Further, retired personnel of Defence Services (excluding Civilian Defence Employees) on attaining the age of 50 years are also eligible to invest in SCSS. The Committee note that benefit under SCSS is already available to Government employees retiring at the age of 55 years and above and SCSS account can be extended for a further period of three years once only. The Department have informed that interest at the rate applicable to the Post Office Savings Account shall be payable on deposits in the SCSS account which are not extended on maturity.

Noting that the retirement benefits may be significantly larger than the amount of Rs. 30 lakh which is permitted under the SCSS, the Committee recommend that the Department should put forth a proposal to remove the limit on SCSS to enable the retired persons to invest a larger portion of their savings in post offices. The age limit of 55 years may also be relaxed for persons who take voluntary retirement at an earlier age. The Committee further recommend that the limitation on renewal of SCSS account may be removed.

It is apparent that MIS provides a steady monthly income to the retired account holders/housewives. The Department may also consider increasing the limit on MIS for

single account and for joint account. The Department should also consider the possibility of sending reminders through SMS and emails to the SCSS account holders on completion of term of the SCSS. The Committee are of the view that the subscriber base of the post office will increase substantially and the amount invested will increase commensurately. The Committee may be apprised of the progress made in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Removing the limit on SCSS, relaxing age limit of 55 years for person taking voluntary retirement, increasing the limit on MIS for single and joint account holders etc. comes under the purview of DEA, MoF. DoP is only implementing organization for the POSB schemes. DoP will convey the advise of the Committee to the nodal ministry for next course of action.

SMS messages are sent to all the account holders including SCSS account holders in advance a month prior to the maturity of the account.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see para 22 of Chapter I)

(Recommendation no. 11)

Widening of the ambit of Post Office Savings Bank

The Committee note that the Post Office Savings Bank has time Deposits scheme with the maturity period of 1 year / 2 year / 3 year and 5 year, National Savings Certificates and KisanVikas Patra. Loan facility is not available on these deposits. The Department have also informed that the customer can avail loan from banks by pledging these

deposits in the bank branch. In respect of Recurring Deposits, account holders can avail loan from the post office to the extent of 50% of balance in the RD account.

The Committee find it encouraging that Department of Posts has received a mandate from Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for opening approx 1.46 Crore accounts of PM KisanSamman Nidhi beneficiaries who are not able to receive Direct Benefit Transfer due to non-availability of Aadhaar seeded accounts. The mandate is received due to vast Distribution network of DOP along with trust on Postmen/GDS of the public in large. The Committee appreciate the efforts of IPPB with regard to opening up of more than 5 lakh PM KisanSamman Nidhi Beneficiary Accounts. Department of Financial Services (DFS), MOF, is the nodal Department/ Ministry for PMSBY (Pradhan Mantri Suraksha BimaYojana) and PMJJBY (Pradhan Mantri Jeevan JyotiBimaYojana) Schemes. These schemes are available through Banks and Post Offices. The eligible Post Office Savings Account holders can enrol under PMSBY and PMJJBY Schemes. 21.32 lakh have enrolled in PMSBY and 1.44 lakh in PMJJBY.

The Committee recommend that the Department may initiate the process of providing loan facility on term deposits and Monthly Income Scheme deposits which would provide additional flow of revenue to the Post office. The Department may examine the possibilities to work in coordination with Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to provide the services of Primary Agriculture Credit Society to the farmers at grass root level through the unparalleled reach and trust enjoyed by the Post Offices. The Department may also explore ways to popularize the PM KisanSamman Nidhi, PMSBY and PMJJBY to increase the subscriber base.

Reply of the Government

Term Deposits (TD), Monthly Income Scheme (MIS) and other POSB schemes come under the jurisdiction of DEA, MoF. DoP is only an implementing organization for the POSB schemes. Action, if any, regarding provision of loan facility on TD or MIS, comes entirely under the purview of DEA, MoF. Advise of the Committee will be shared with the nodal ministry for next course of action.

PM KisanSamman Nidhi is being popularized by opening Savings Account of the beneficiaries through both IPPB and Post Office Savings Accounts. PMSBY and PMJJBY schemes are available to all Post Office Savings Accounts (POSA) holders. These schemes are being popularized in coordination with Department of Financial Services, the nodal ministry.

(Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications OM No. 28-5/2023/Bgt dated 08.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee
(Please see para 25 of Chapter I)

New Delhi;
7 August, 2023
16 Sravana, 1944 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV,
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Communications and Information Technology.

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2022-23)
MINUTES OF THE SEVENTEENTH SITTING OF THE
COMMITTEE**

The Committee sat on Monday, the 07 August, 2023 from 1500 hours to 1645 hours in Committee Room '3' Extention to Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Prataprao Jadhav- Chairperson

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Karti P. Chidambaram
3. Smt. Sunita Duggal
4. Shri Jayadev Galla
5. Smt. Raksha Nikhil Khadse
6. Shri Santosh Pandey
7. Shri Sanjay Seth
8. Dr. M.K. Vishnu Prasad

Rajya Sabha

9. Dr. Anil Agrawal
10. Dr. John Brittas
11. Shri Syed Nasir Hussain
12. Shri Jawahar Sircar

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Satpal Gulati - Additional Secretary
2. Smt. Jyothirmayi - Director
3. Shri Nishant Mehra - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened to consider and adopt three draft Action Taken Reports on Demands for Grants (2023-24) relating to the Ministries/Departments under their jurisdiction and to have a briefing by the representatives of Department of Telecommunications, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, Bharti Airtel Ltd., Tele Communications Consultants India Ltd. and Bharti Hexacom Ltd. on the subject **‘Review of the performance of schemes under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) with special emphasis on North East and LWE affected areas’**.

3. The Committee, then, took up the following draft Reports for consideration and adoption.

- (i) Draft Action Taken Report on Forty Third Report on ‘Demands for Grants (2023-24)’ relating to the Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications).
- (ii) Draft Action Taken Report on Forty Sixth Report on ‘Demands for Grants (2023-24)’ relating to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- (iii) Draft Action Taken Report on Forty Fourth Report on ‘Demands for Grants (2023-24)’ relating to the Ministry of Communications (Department of Posts)

4. After due deliberations, the Committee adopted the Reports with some modifications.

5. The Committee authorized the Chairperson to finalize the draft Action Taken Reports and present the same to the House during the current Session of Parliament.

6. The Committee then called the representative of Department of Telecommunications, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, Bharti Airtel Ltd., Tele Communications Consultants India Ltd. and Bharti Hexacom Ltd. to have briefing on the subject **‘Review of the performance of schemes under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) with special emphasis on North East and LWE affected areas’**.

6. xxxxxxxx.....xxxxxxx.....xxxxxxx*

7. xxxxxxxx.....xxxxxxx.....xxxxxxx

A copy of verbatim record of the proceedings was kept on record.

The Committee, then, adjourned.

* Matters not related to the Report

Annexure-II

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS
CONTAINED IN THEIR FORTY FOURTH REPORT

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

[Vide Paragraph No. 5 of Introduction]

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,10

Total	8
Percentage	72.72

- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government

Rec. Sl. No.: Nil

Total	Nil
Percentage	0.00

- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 6

Total	01
Percentage	9.09

- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the replies of the Government are of interim in nature

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 9,11

Total	2
Percentage	18.18